

AUNT BETTY'S POND LITTLE BRIDGES

Acadia National Park Raods & Bridges

Spanning unnamed brook on Aunt Betty's Pond Carriage Road

Bar Harbor Vicinity

Hancock County

Maine

HAER NO. ME-50

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Department of the Interior

P.O. Box 37127

Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

AUNT BETTY POND ROAD LITTLE BRIDGES

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HAER No. ME-50

LOCATION: Spanning unnamed brook on Aunt Betty Pond Carriage Road, Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor vicinity, Mount Desert Island, Hancock County, Maine
Quadrangles: Southwest Harbor, ME
UTMs: #1: 19/558300/4911210
#2: 19/558290/4911250
#3: 19/558290/4911270
#4: 19/558290/4911300
#5: 19/558290/4911325
#6: 19/558250/4911380

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1930

ENGINEER: Paul D. Simpson, Seal Harbor, Maine

CONTRACTOR: B. W. Candage & Son, Seal Harbor, Maine

STRUCTURE TYPE: Concrete deck bridges on steel girder stringers

FhWA STRUCTURE Nos. 1700-027S to 1700-035S

OWNER: Acadia National Park, National Park Service

SIGNIFICANCE: This series of six small bridges carries a connector Aunt Betty Pond Carriage Road back and forth across a small brook as the road drops down the northeast slope of Sargent Mountain to Gilmore Meadow. The road was purposefully routed to cross the stream numerous time for scenic effect, and the small rustic bridges provide for the crossings.

PROJECT INFORMATION: Documentation of the Aunt Betty Pond Road Little Bridges is part of the Acadia National Park Roads and Bridges Recording Project, undertaken by the Historic American Engineering Record in 1994-95. The related report in this series, HAER No. ME-12, ROCKEFELLER CARRIAGE ROADS, contains more information on the island's carriage road system.

Richard Quin, HAER Historian, 1997

Six small wooden bridges carry the Aunt Betty Pond Carriage Road's southern connector to the West Sargent Mountain Carriage Road over a small unnamed brook as the road descends the north flank of the Sargent Mountain mass. The road could have easily been routed to avoid the stream, but John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who funded the construction of the carriage road system on Mount Desert Island, chose to have it crossed multiple times to add variety to a road which would otherwise be a mere route through deep woods. Mrs. Rockefeller supposedly enjoyed the sound of horses' hooves as they crossed wooden bridges, and this may have influenced his decision to have the six bridges constructed on the short, half-mile segment. Several short bridges of the same type had already been constructed on the extensive carriage road system of the Rockefeller's Pocantico Hills, New York estate. Nearly identical structures were constructed on the Eagle Lake Loop Carriage Road [HAER No. ME-49] and on the Jordan Stream bridle trail [HAER No. ME-48].

The connector between the West Sargent Mountain Road and Aunt Betty Pond was staked out by Rockefeller's carriage road engineer, Paul D. Simpson, in 1930. Construction began the following year.¹ The road was constructed by Seal Harbor contractor Chauncey D. Joy, and he likely built the bridges as well.

Rockefeller was once asked by Beatrix Farrand, the landscape gardener who advised him on design treatments for his carriage road system, why he constructed some of his bridges out of wood when most were imposing stone-faced structures. He replied that by using steel stringers, the wooden bridges could be constructed just as strong as the stone bridges, and by using them from time to time, a rustic quality would be introduced to the carriage road system. Rockefeller had originally intended to use rough cedar logs and poles for the railings, but Mrs. Farrand objected, stating the cedar would lose its bark in several years and take on a shabby appearance. She favored instead the use of adze-hewn timbers, as these were pleasing in appearance and had been used in bridge construction for hundreds of years.² Her suggestion was adopted, and the bridges all feature railings of squared

¹"Proposed Road, Mount Desert Island, Maine," map, 1930, Acadia National Park, Maintenance Division files; Paul D. Simpson, Seal Harbor, ME to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., New York, 7 December 1930, Rockefeller Archives Center, Simpson Family Papers, Record Group IV3A10, Box 1, Folder 3.

²John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to Beatrix Farrand, 16 May 1929; Farrand to Rockefeller, 22 May 1929. Rockefeller Archives Center, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, Record Group 2, Homes (Seal Harbor), Box 72, Folder 738.

timbers.

The six bridges are all single span structures less than 12' in length. Their concrete slab decks are supported on three longitudinal steel stringers resting on native granite abutments. The decks were originally cedar poles hewn flat, but were replaced with the slabs around 1948.³ Railings are 6" square timbers and consist of horizontal members supported on posts and braced at the end with diagonal end posts. The timbers are joined by bolts, but wooden dowels cover the bolt holes and give the appearance of pin-connected assembly. The ends of the inclined end posts rest on small boulders; dowels again suggest the posts are pinned to the stones, but they merely rest on the rocks.

The bridges are sometimes mistakenly referred to as the "Seven Sisters." The "Seven Sisters" are actually the seven magnificent stone arch bridges on the loop carriage road encircling the Sargent Mountain massif,⁴ though Rockefeller evidently never used the term. There are only six of the small wooden bridges on the Aunt Betty Pond carriage road, though it supposedly crosses the brook a seventh time on a small culvert.

³Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and McGinley Hart & Associates, *Historic Bridge Reconnaissance Survey, Carriage Road System, Acadia National Park*, draft edition (Boston, MA: National Park Service, North Atlantic Regional Office, September 1993), 141.

⁴Tom St. Germain, *Acadia's Biking Guide and Carriage Road Handbook* (Bar Harbor, ME: Parkman Publications, 1995), 24.

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